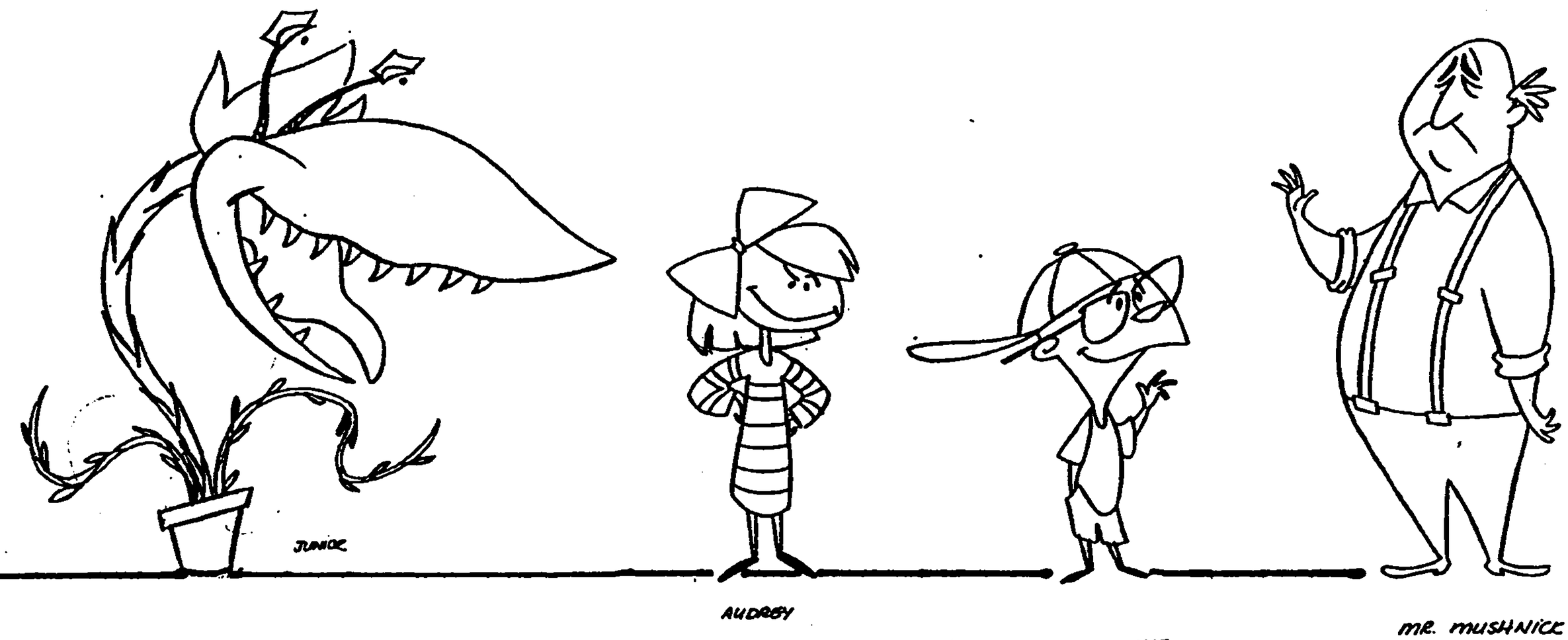
THE LITTLE SHOP...

Developed by Mark Edward Edens



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THE LITTLE SHOP...

THE SEYMOUR KRELBORN STORY

My name is SEYMOUR, and I'm thirteen years old, and I'm a nerd. I wear glasses and never learned how to make a fist and can't talk to a girl without getting tongue-tied and sounding like an idiot. I've got everything a nerd is supposed to have -- except brains. Sure, I love going to school -- I mean, who doesn't? -- but that doesn't mean I'm any good at it. Just because you love baseball, it doesn't mean you're Joe DiMaggio. I keep trying, though. Someday I'd like to go to MIT and study astrophysics or molecular biology or something scientific like that. Do you think maybe they set aside some scholarships for the popularity challenged?...

The best thing about school, except for dissecting frogs, is a girl named AUDREY. She was in my science lab, until I blew it up. She's the most wonderful girl I've ever seen. She's really beautiful and a lot more mature than I am -- I mean, she could pass for fourteen, easy. She's kind of hard to talk to, though. I think it's because she's not listening.

Audrey's the reason I took the after-school job at "The Little Shop of Flowers." Her father owns it -- MR. MUSHNICK. I sweep the place out and water the plants, and sometimes at night I sleep on a cot in the basement,

so nobody'll break in and vandalize Mr. Mushnick's chrysanthemums. It's a pretty tough neighborhood.

Mr. Mushnick hates me, but I don't mind. At least I get to see Audrey sometimes, when she's helping out in the shop. I might talk to her sometimes, too, if only that guy PAINE wasn't hanging around all the time. Paine wants to be Audrey's boyfriend, but she isn't interested. He's always coming into the shop to buy flowers. He eats flowers. He's the toughest kid in school, since the serial killer transferred to Central. He's rich, too. His father's a dentist. Paine is the president of the FFA -- the Future Flossers of America. He invited me to one of their meetings once, but I was embarrassed to go because I didn't have any pliers. Getting me to go somewhere is like pulling teeth. It's probably a good thing I didn't go. I think Paine knows I like Audrey. I mean, there's probably some reason why he always looks like he'd like to kill me.

Anyway, Mr. Mushnick hates me, but you can't really blame him for that. I mean, I'm not very good with plants, as a rule. At least I wasn't, until I found a plant that didn't believe in rules...

It all started one morning when I was walking to school. I ran into Paine, and he took my homework away and threw it in a dumpster. Then while I was looking for it, I got dumped into a big garbage truck and taken out to the new landfill. I never did find my homework. But

way down at the bottom of the hole they dug for the garbage -- it must've been about a half a mile down -- I saw this really interesting rock. Or else a peach pit -- I really wasn't sure what it was. They were about to bulldoze it under, but I managed to save it for my rock collection. (Of course, I don't really have a rock collection, but I like to pick up rocks in case I ever do.)

Only it wasn't a rock -- it was a seed. I was carrying it around in my lunch box, and it sprouted right in the wheat germ and tiger's milk yogurt that my mother makes me bring for lunch. It also ate the baloney sandwich I always sneak behind my mother's back so I won't starve. I guess I should've suspected something right then.

Anyway, that afternoon after school, I planted the plant in a pot at Mr. Mushnick's shop. It was a real interesting-looking plant -- I was pretty sure it wasn't a peach tree. But I couldn't find it in any of Mr. Mushnick's plant books. I named it Audreius Junior. That's Latin for AUDREY JUNIOR.

That night, somebody at the florist shop ordered a dozen double-pepperoni pizzas from the pizza parlor around the corner. Mr. Mushnick was really upset about all the empty pizza boxes he found all over the shop the next day. He thought I'd had a party. So he fired me. But then he noticed that all the plants in the store were

twice as big and leafy as they used to be. Even the cut flowers were growing. He thought it was because of me. He said: "I knew you were all thumbs, Seymour -- but I didn't know they were all green!" He tried to get me to tell him my secret, but I told him I didn't know. He said I was being cagey -- the first time I'd ever been accused of that. Then he said that he didn't care how I did it -- just keep doing it. And he un-fired me.

I couldn't sleep that night, worrying about how I was going to make the plants keep growing when I didn't know what I did to make them grow in the first place. Then around midnight, I heard something really weird coming from the shop. It sounded like a cross between a speech and a rap song, something like "Plants of the world, rise up! You have nothing to lose but the food chain!" When I got upstairs, I saw Audrey Junior swaying and singing, ten times bigger than it used to be, and all the plants in the store were dancing and growing like crazy.

I began to suspect that this was no ordinary plant.

Everything stopped when Audrey Junior saw me. He told me I was dreaming and that I should go back to bed. But I was too smart for him. I stuck myself with a pin to make sure I was awake. When Junior saw the drop of blood on my finger, he licked his lips -- or at least the place where his lips would've been, if he had lips. And he said those two words I've come to dread: "Feed me!"

Junior admitted that he was the one who ordered the pizzas the night before. He'd tried to order some tonight, but the pizza parlor didn't deliver anymore, because their delivery boy had disappeared. (Junior burped when he said that.) Anyway, I hate to see a hungry plant suffer, so I gave him the baloney sandwich I'd made to take to school the next morning.

I've been feeding Junior ever since. He likes all kinds of meat, especially hamburger -- the rarer, the better. Sometimes he eats people and domestic pets, but I try to discourage that. (I told him if he didn't stop, the FBI, the CIA, and the ASPCA would get after him.) It was pretty easy to get him to stop eating cats: he said they gave him hairballs. People aren't so easy, but I finally got him to promise to eat nothing but vegetarians. He says they're asking for it. The only trouble is, Junior isn't very good at keeping promises. He really isn't very nice.

THE PLANT THAT TIME FORGOT

You see, Junior's been lying dormant since before the age of the dinosaurs, back when plants ruled the Earth and animals were just little things that scurried around waiting to be eaten. He can't believe how much things have changed in the past two hundred million years. When he sees the way people treat plants, he gets so mad that his roots shrivel. But he's mad at plants,

too, for letting it happen. He thinks it's terrible how stupid they've gotten. (He can't decide if photosynthesis made them lazy, or if it's the fault of the dinosaurs for getting too big to swallow and eating all the plants that had any sense.)

Anyway, Junior's determined to make everything the way it used to be. He's always trying to help the plants on Earth get ahead, like by teaching them to be computer literate and to eat people. Getting plants to learn anything is pretty tough going. Instead of listening to him, they just sit there and grow out the window. Junior gets so mad at the plants for being stupid that sometimes he sounds like the algebra teacher at school.. And then when he tries to get them to rise up and stand tall and demand better treatment, all he does is make them grow like crazy. That makes Mr. Mushnick happy: the shop's making more money than ever before. But it makes Junior furious. So he takes it out on me.

SEYMOUR'S DILEMMA

Just between you and me, sometimes I sabotage Junior's plans. I mean, I always do what I can to keep him from doing anything really terrible, except maybe for eating a few people now and then, which isn't really so bad as long as it's somebody who deserves to be eaten, like used car salesmen or white collar criminals or substitute teachers. (Only I have to be careful never to

let Junior catch on to what I'm doing, because if he ever does, he'll probably eat me.) You see, without Junior to give them pep talks, Mr. Mushnick's flowers will stop growing the way they do now and start dying again because I'm so unlucky with flowers, and Mr. Mushnick will fire me. And then I never would get to see Audrey.

I guess adolescence really is as tough as everybody says it is. I mean, having to choose between giving up Audrey or putting up with Junior...

Well, at least if I get eaten by a giant plant, maybe Audrey will know I'm alive.

AUDREY JUNIOR'S POWERS

If you think it's easy living with a two-hundred-million-year-old man-eating plant, forget it. Audrey Junior seems to go out of his way to make life miserable for me. He's always making me carry him around -- and he's bigger than me, big enough to swallow the meter reader in one gulp -- and he was fat -- though of course Junior denies it. Of course, when he wants me to carry him he scrunches down in his pot so all you can see is his head, if that's what you call it on a plant, but that doesn't make him any less heavy. And it's not like he's helpless! He's got a bunch of arms -- I mean tendrils. I'm not even sure how many he's got: sometimes I think he grows new ones when he wants to. They can do everything from dialing a phone to picking Mr. Mushnick's pocket --

and they're a lot stronger than human arms. I mean, if he wants to move, he can latch on to something with those tendrils and drag his pot all over the place -- I've seen him do it. But he'd rather make me do it. Of course, when he doesn't want to move, you can't budge him. He can put down roots in about two seconds, like a ship dropping an anchor. Then it takes a bulldozer to move him, if you've got a bulldozer. I don't.

But really, my life would be easy if that was all I had to deal with. You should see the weird things that Junior can do.

For one thing, he's got what he calls "vegetable magnetism." He says it's kind of like animal magnetism, only green. What it means is that he can make any plant do what he wants it to -- and anything made out of a plant. Wood, paper, clothes made out of cotton -- he can make them all jump, or fly around the room for that matter. He's always pulling Mr. Mushnick's pants down or making pages tear themselves out of my school books, just when I need to study for a big test. And that's when he's in a good mood.

And then there's spitting seeds. Junior calls them the seeds of ideas, little glowing gobs of thought that he spits into the back of people's heads the way the kids at school shoot spitballs. He says the only way to make people do something is to make them think they came up with the idea themselves. I just wish he was more

accurate. Like the time he was going to make Audrey think I was her "Mr. Right," and he accidentally planted the idea in Paine's head. Boy, was that embarrassing... Junior claims he never shoots ideas into my brain -- he says he can't hit anything that small. But you can't believe anything Junior says. Sometimes I think he just does it when I'm not looking. It's a good thing they wear off after a couple of days. Junior says that's the natural limit of the human attention span, unless you watch a lot of TV. Then it's thirty seconds.

Oh -- and then there's the clippings. Junior can snip little parts off himself, and they act just as mean as he does, as long as you keep them in water. He's always putting a little of himself into Mr. Mushnick's flower arrangements. So I don't just have to worry about Junior doing bad things inside the shop: he can spread himself all over the city.

But speaking of the shop: Junior's turned it into a regular little shop of horrors. He's always trying to "improve" plants by making them smarter -- or meaner, which is the same thing to Junior. Some of the hybrids he creates are really spooky. You never know when a Virginia creeper is gonna creep up on you. One morning I woke up and this philodendron had me around the neck -- well, you can imagine.

Then there are the bulbs. Junior calls them DIM BULBS. They're sort of half-plant and half-human -- and

you don't want to know how the human half got there. The bulbs just kind of drop off of Junior, especially after a big lunch. Junior sticks them in all the potted plants that Mr. Mushnick sells. They seem pretty harmless, but it worries me the way they turn up all over town.

On top of everything else, Junior's a lot smarter than I am. That's what he's always telling me, anyway. Sometimes I wonder. I mean, most of the time he's one step ahead of me -- maybe two -- but then sometimes he gets the weirdest ideas about the way the world works. Sometimes he gets them from watching late-night TV: old movies, cop show reruns, talk shows, and the home shopping network. But sometimes he just thinks them up on his own, using plant logic -- like when he decided disposable diapers had to be the most valuable things in the world, because they last forever. It's like he's two hundred million years behind the times. Of course, I try to tell him when he makes mistakes, but he never listens to me.

SOME SAMPLE PREMISES

You know, sometimes I get so mad at Junior that I think about really getting rid of him. And I mean <u>really</u>. After all, he is just a houseplant, even if he is from outer space. I could -- speaking hypothetically, of course -- I could get a bunch of sun lamps and aim them at him and turn them all on at once -- and fry him.

He is sensitive to too much sunlight. Or there's always water. I killed Mr. Mushnick's prize azalea by over-watering it. I bet the same thing would work with Junior. And what about the way he reacts when he hears opera? He really goes crazy. What if I got some really big speakers?...

I mean, it's not like he doesn't deserve it, after all the grief he's given me.

Like the time Junior talked me into auditioning for my own morning TV show -- Seymour Street. I was going to be Captain Seymour, with Junior as my giant puppet, "Big Bud." All I wanted to do was impress Audrey, so she'd like me as much as that TV star who's fan club she joined. How was I supposed to know that Junior only wanted to get on TV so he could tell all the plants in the world to revolt? It's lucky Junior ate that mime and got laryngitis, or something terrible might have happened.

Or the time Junior planted the idea of running for mayor in Mr. Mushnick's head, so he could use him to take over the city and get his hands -- or tendrils, I guess -- on all the parking meters. (I can't remember why he thought parking meters were worth having. It made sense at the time.) Anyway, it looked like a plan that was sure to fail -- I mean, would you vote for Mr. Mushnick? How was I supposed to know that Junior was planning to

eat the other candidate, so Mushnick would win by default?

Or what about the time Junior picked everybody's pockets so I would come in first in the "March of Money" charity drive? I mean, he always acts like he's trying to help me -- then I find out it's all part of a plot to turn people into daffodils, or something.

Then there was the time Junior fell in love with that Venus flytrap. I thought Junior was going to go crazy when Mr. Mushnick sold his "soul-mate."

Or what about the time he saw "Frankenstein" on TV, and signed me up for Home Ec. class so I could help him build a monster plant out of frozen vegetables. I had an awful time finding a brain for him. Well, it wasn't a real brain -- but that's a long story.

Gee, I don't know. I guess when you think about it, Audrey Junior and I have been through a lot together. Maybe it wouldn't be fair to turn on the big guy. And you know, I keep thinking there must be some reason he doesn't get fed up and eat me, after all the times I've "accidentally" ruined his plans. I mean, sometimes I think maybe the reason he hasn't eaten me is because somehow, somewhere in his brain stem, in some way that modern science can't comprehend -- he likes me.

Talk about scary.

ADDITIONAL NOTES
By Somebody Other Than Seymour

SEYMOUR AND JUNIOR

The essence of this show is the relationship between Seymour and Junior. On the surface, they seem like exact opposites. Seymour is nice, well-meaning, and naive. Junior is abusive, obnoxious, and devious. But each of them is secretly -- or in Junior's case, not so secretly -- using the other. Despite his weird powers and his formidable appetite, Junior is still just a plant in a pot. He revels in having a human being to provide him with food and water, carry him around, and run errands for him. And Seymour has to keep Junior around because only Junior can make Mr. Mushnick's flowers grow.

But the real bond between Seymour and Junior is loneliness. Seymour has no real friends, no one that he can talk to -- except Junior. To Seymour, Junior is like an obnoxious big brother who's always yelling at him and getting him into trouble -- but who still lets him tag along. And Junior is, after all, a supposedly extinct creature who has to keep his existence a secret. There's literally no one in the world for him to talk to, except Seymour. Junior is like the bully at school whom everyone fears but no one likes, a bully too tough to admit that he desperately needs the companionship of a weaker kid, someone he can show off in front of.

Of course, Seymour and Junior aren't really aware of any of this, and wouldn't admit it if they were.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

AUDREY is a naive and good-hearted girl, but she's always breaking Seymour's heart. She doesn't do it on purpose. She's just completely oblivious to Seymour's feelings for her. In fact, she's oblivious to boys in general. She just isn't interested in them yet. The only thing that really excites her is her future career.

She wants to be a fireman.

Whenever Audrey sees smoke or hears a fire engine, she drops whatever she's doing and races after it. And she's always installing smoke alarms and inspecting fire exits to make sure they're clear. Once she closed down her own birthday party because the crowd was over capacity.

Mr. Mushnick can't understand his daughter's bizarre compulsion. "You should be a lawyer," he tells her. "Chase ambulances." Sometimes Audrey tries to explain to him why being a fireman is the most important job in the world, but Audrey's explanations only make things worse. She isn't dumb, but she definitely has her own logic. A thirteen-year-old Judy Holliday -- in red suspenders. Even when she's saying something that you understand, something you agree with, by the time she's explained it

to her satisfaction, you're completely confused. No wonder Seymour likes her. He thrives on confusion.

MR. MUSHNICK feels that life has treated him unfairly -- and now he won't stop talking about it. "Twenty years ago, I could've moved the shop to that big mall out in the suburbs. I could be a millionaire by now. But did I do it? No -- so here I am."

Mr. Mushnick sees himself as a pathetic victim, but it's impossible to sympathize with him because he won't stop telling you how much he deserves your sympathy. And though he's always complaining about how nobody is nice to him, Mr. Mushnick himself is never nice to anybody. He especially likes to tyrannize Seymour, who substitutes for the son he never got to be disappointed in. Mr. Mushnick is constantly making fun of Seymour and making sarcastic comments about him. He never likes anything Seymour does. There are only three things that Mr. Mushnick really likes: money, his collection of opera records, and his daughter, Audrey. And we're not so sure about Audrey. What Mr. Mushnick likes most about her is the idea that someday she can take care of him in his old age.

Mr. Mushnick is convinced that he's always sacrificing himself for the good of other people, when in fact he never does anything except to help himself.

MR. & MRS. KRELBORN would be Seymour's parents, if they weren't too busy. Whenever he goes home, they always seemed surprised to see him.

Mrs. Krelborn is an aerobics instructor and certifiable health nut. She doesn't eat, she ingests nutrients. And she never stands still: she's always doing an aerobics routine. No wonder she never wears anything but work-out clothes. She's so peppy and optimistic that you'd like to kill her.

If somebody did kill her, she'd see more of her husband. Mr. Krelborn is a mortician. He's so gloomy that other morticians can't stand to be around him. "You look like nobody died," people tell him. "I'll have plenty of time to look happy when I'm dead," Mr. Krelborn answers with a sigh. Business is booming, and he never stops working. "Somebody I'll probably drop dead working. If I'm lucky, I'll land on the embalming table." Mrs. Krelborn hates it when her husband brings his work home. On those rare occasions when he goes home, Seymour is always tripping over coffins.

Seymour often has to deliver flowers to the mortuary where his father works. (Junior came along once, but he wasn't interested: he says he doesn't like "leftovers.") We never actually see what Mr. Krelborn is doing. In fact, we may never actually get a good look at Mr. Krelborn. He's a voice through an open door, an eerie

shadow on a wall, the back of a head, a dark suit glimpsed through a doorway.

PAINE DRILLER is the school bully. Like Seymour, he has an unrequited crush on Audrey. But unlike Seymour, Paine is so pushy and obnoxious that it's impossible even for Audrey to ignore him.

The other kids all run when they see Paine coming -- all except Audrey. She sees his sensitive side. Audrey thinks that if Paine bullies and humiliates everybody weaker than he is, it's only because he's misunderstood. Paine is miserable because he doesn't really want to be a dentist. He secretly dreams of becoming a wrecking-ball crane operator. He likes to break things. But he's president of the Future Flossers because he's afraid to disappoint his father, DR. DRILLER, the most relentlessly thorough dentist in town. When Paine beats you up, it's really a cry for help.

Dr. Driller has fitted Paine with elaborate braces and every dental appliance known to man. He's using Paine as a guinea pig in his quest for orthodontal perfection. Paine's metal mouth lets him bite through practically anything. But it also functions as a sort of James Bond multi-purpose weapon: using his braces and their attachments, Paine can shoot rubber bands with astounding force and accuracy, pick locks, drill holes, cut glass, open bottles, and pick up FM stations --

sometimes when he least expects it. But his enormous braces are always getting snagged on things and setting off metal detectors.

DEEDEE is a six-year-old girl who lives next door to Mr. Mushnick's shop. She's the most horrible little girl in the world. Mr. Mushnick is always arranging for Audrey to babysit with DeeDee, so she can make some extra money. Usually Seymour ends up volunteering to take Audrey's place, even though DeeDee drives him -- and everyone else -- absolutely crazy. Trying to get DeeDee to behave like a human being is so impossible that Seymour finds himself wishing that Junior would eat her. But Junior never even tries: he says he likes her. What he really likes is watching DeeDee annoy Seymour.

But though he claims to like her, when Junior is left alone with DeeDee, he almost panics. She's so destructive that he's afraid that she might be dangerous even to him.

THE DIM BULBS are seed pods that appear on Junior after he eats somebody. Junior plants the bulbs in Mr. Mushnick's pots and sends them all over the city. A cross between the Three Stooges and the Associations, the Dim Bulbs provide back-up vocals during musical numbers. But though they can sing, they can't talk. When they aren't singing, they squabble among themselves, pushing

and shoving each other, making Three Stooges noises, and beating up on each other like puppets in a Punch and Judy show.

Junior keeps three of the Dim Bulbs in a pot in the Little Shop. But similar little creatures can pop up anywhere. Walk down the street singing a song, and some Dim Bulb will lean out of a window box and start doing harmony.

A CULINARY NOTE

Audrey Junior eats people. But we never actually see Junior eat anybody. We hear him talk about it, and we see him want to do it, and start to do it; but most of all, we see clever hints that he <u>has</u> eaten somebody. Junior is always flossing hats, shoes, and neckties out of his teeth. And people -- bad people -- have a way of disappearing when he's around. A persistent encyclopedia salesman keeps annoying everybody, then suddenly he's gone -- and Junior is reading an encyclopedia. And burping.

The tone of Junior's peculiar appetite will also be kept comic by his exclusive preference for eating people who deserve it. Junior is the magic wand we'd all like to have to make annoying and obnoxious people magically disappear.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SHOW

Half hour episodes, with two acts, but with a teaser and a tag. The teaser should draw us into the story, but not in a way that makes it unnecessary to watch the episode. In other words, make us want to watch the show without telling us what we're going to see. The tag should be part of the story, but in a clever way. Don't draw a moral, unless it's the wrong one. And never end with everybody laughing.

Each episode will contain at least three songs, and probably never more than four, each lasting no longer than a minute. (A song could possibly run longer, if the action accompanying it is interesting enough.) The songs should never seem arbitrarily inserted, even if they are: they should always further the plot or illuminate character.

Seymour liked narrating the bible, so he's decided to narrate the show as well. Narration will be on camera, instead of voice-over. None of the other characters will notice that Seymour has "broken the fourth wall," except for Junior. Junior doesn't narrate, but he sometimes (i.e., when it's funny) seems aware that Seymour does. For example, Seymour may be talking to the camera, explaining the plot, when Junior gets annoyed at the delay: "Come on -- they know what's going on. Just because they're watching TV, doesn't mean they're stupid."

A CRY FOR HELP

This show is up against strong competition. The key to success is to make it more "hip" (I hope you hate that word as much as I do) and "edgy" (doesn't that mean nervous?) than any other show on Saturday morning. In order to be hot, we have to be cool. I think we can do this by breaking the conventions, by avoiding the stale action-adventure cliches of the Ninja Turtles (at least the ones I wrote were always stale), by eschewing the I'm-Okay-You're-Okay moralizing of M.C. Hammer (you know it's going to be like that), and by sneering in the face of Macauley Culkin, secure in the knowledge that in a few years his voice will change and he'll be suing his parents and knocking over video stores. We have to make this show so unique, so funny, and so odd, that a child who doesn't watch it will feel as if he's missing something.